The Paradox of Evil and the Good God: the Igbo Perspective
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Abstract
Perhaps of all the problems begging the attention of metaphysical thought, the paradox of evil and the good God is the most worrisome and intractable. This paper undertakes an analytical study of the problem by Igbo philosophers and scholars which reveals that most of them are of the view that any solutions which hanker on the moral 'will disorders' of man or the nature of God alone as the cause of evil are one- side and incomprehensible since they neither sufficiently exonerate man nor God from the problem. It is therefore the thrust of this paper that though evil may be linked to God, he is not the proximate cause of it since evil may be part of a rational design for maintaining a perfect universal order. Again, on the grounds that man being a tripartite being his spiritual status drags in the spirits, (gods) in a share of his blames and praises. Consequently, this paper adopts the middle – course view, namely, that man, his personal god and destiny and some other malevolent spirits are the originators of evil in the world. Conclusively, the paper equivocally adds that reason is incapable of comprehending the true nature of evil and the good God enjoining a combined application of faith and the rational faculty in seeking an adequate understanding of the paradox of evil and the good God.

Introduction

It is the hermeneutics of the Igbo to harmonize the incompatible attributes of the good, omnipotent and creating God with evil in the world. Even though the early Greek philosophers turned their attention primarily to unraveling the cause and causes of the material universe, the history of philosophy reveals that the metaphysical question: whence is evil in a universe created by an Omnipotent and Good God is coeval with Greek thought and philosophy. Yet the problem of evil which is the problem of the source and purpose of Good and Evil in the universe has at all times drawn the attention of philosophers and laymen alike. Little wonder the problem was interwoven with that of the universe. Thus Western philosophers are divided into two warring camps, namely those who exonerate God from being the cause of evil and those who see God as being the cause of these hardship, suffering, disease and evils in the world. However convincing or unconvincing these arguments may be, we are still confronted with evil in our world today, and we keep asking anew the question: What is evil? Why is there evil in a world created by a Good God?

Schopenhauer and Leibniz were regarded the best known modern philosophers to raise the issue of evil with renewed urgency. Schopenhauer alerted the world that this is, if anything, the worst of all possible worlds and that consequently we are not justified in concluding that God exists or that the world with all its evil is the creation of a Good God.

Leibniz on his part was aware of the fact of evil and disorder but considers it compatible with the notion of a benevolent Creator. He (Leibniz) poses the question very mildly: "If God exists, whence is evil"? If he does not exist, whence is good?

This paradox of the existence of evil in a world was revived in the medieval ages by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas in their search for the solution to the problem. St. Augustine (1960) once posed this sole-searching question with renewed urgency when he posed the sole searching question in the middle ages: "Whence, therefore is evil, since God the good has made all these things good? He the greater, the Supreme good, has made these lesser goods, yet both creator and the created things are good. Whence comes evil? (p. 163). Hume (1969) puts this problem in the form of dilemma: "Is God willing to prevent evil but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil? (p. 66).

Buddha (1975) though an atheist was nevertheless worried about the same problem, namely, evil in the world. His beliefs and assumptions condition his views on the origin, presence and meaning of evil in the universe. He thought that all suffering or evil is born out of persistent and insatiable desire. This led him to conclude that "all suffering and evil would stop when all desires have been quenched". (p. 139).

Many Western philosophers approached the problem of evil by denying the existence of God. This explains why many of them like Karl Marx, Fredrich Engels, Nitche, Schopenhauer, etc; never succeeded in reconciling the contradiction involved in the problem. For these atheists, God does not exist, God never existed and he now does not exist. If however, he chanced to exist, then he is long dead and should be forgotten. If we discover him still, he should be killed or retired or do away with him. This does not solve the problem. In this atheistic stand and in this atheistic world people are liberated from the burden of sin with its attendant consequences. God's existence and His essential nature must be admitted and addressed alongside with the existence of evil in the world. This is a vexing issue which we shall address in what follows below, namely, within Igbo tribal universe where Edeh (1985) rightly observes that: "Jungles of beings preying on other beings, savage disorder in the face of order, human suffering in bodies ravaged and spirits torn, the destruction of man by man, the self- destruction of moral evil".(p.102). Igbo philosophers and scholars have always searched

for the solutions among the pre- modern Igbo and the contention since then had been whether or not God is responsible for all the evil in Igbo tribal universe. The search gave birth to three opposing camps which we shall critically examine in this paper. To comprehend the problem in all its various dimensions, let us briefly clarify the concept of evil itself. What then is evil? What are the very species of evil?

The Nature of Evil
Evil and its Various Categories
This is seen as a privation of a nature due to a being. Evil is essentially a non- being, for it does not have self- existence. It only exists in a being. This is why we cannot see evil but we can see an evil man, or an evil action. Bogliolo (1985) in his Book*; Metaphysics,* defines evil as the privation of the subject's rightful perfection. It is not evil, for instance, for a stone to become blind. This is because sight is not in the rightful nature of stones. Hence, there is no privation of a rightful nature. It then becomes a grave evil for man to be deprived of sight, because it is a rightful nature to human beings. This, in a nutshell, means that evil is committed when that which is the rightful nature of being is being deprived.

Evil, in addition, is opposed to good, which is the integrity or perfection of being in all orders; material, moral and spiritual. Evil is sometimes taken concretely as the thing that is evil. That is, the subject affected by evil. At other times, it is taken formally to designate the ill affecting the subject. This is why one can ascribe evil to somebody with a wounded leg. St. Augustine used the words "*privatio boni*" to describe evil. It is the absence of, privation of good that is supposed to be there, but is now lacking. Therefore, when that which is supposed to be there, which is the good is not there, a lack or evil comes in.

 The meaning of evil becomes less elusive and easy to grasp when placed side by side its opposite, namely, "good". The "good" simply defined as that "which all desire or the desirable". "Evil" is the privation of a good or a quality which is natural to a being, which should be present in a being, and therefore is the "undesirable". No one desires evil. All beings in so far as they are beings are good. Even depraved wills like Satan's and evil people are good as beings but turned towards evil. A distinction is often made between the good which starts from us and the good which we suffer and endure the former as moral evil and the latter is physical evil. The other is the metaphysical evil which consists in imperfections inherent in a being.

"Evil', that is to say, "the absence of perfection" or privation is regarded by the Igbo as an offence against *Omenani*: a generic term for a body of Igbo socio- religious laws, customs   and traditions passed from generation to generation and handed down to the ancestors from God through the Earth goddess. There are therefore three main types of evil, namely, metaphysical, physical and moral evils.

Moral Evil

Moral evil consists essentially in the disorder of the will**.** Iroegbu calls it evil purposely or unconsciously perpetuated by man on himself or on others. In his book, *Elements of Philosophy* Wallace (1977) defined evil as "a privation of a rectitude required by a natural law, a privation affecting a freewill, which through its own fault lacks the perfection it ought to have".(p.144)

In addition, Reinchenbach (1982) tells us that moral evil is not only on the mental aspect but also includes the physical aspects. He writes: "Moral evil is all the instances of pain and suffering- physical and mental- and all states of affairs significantly disadvantageous to the organism which are caused by actions for which human agents can be held morally blameworthy." (p. 2).

Moral evil, however, is the most prevalent, heinously aggravating of all evil. It is in the case of moral evil that the reality of God is put to question: Why has this innocent man be cruelly brutalized by wicked people? Why should this city be deliberately and consciously destroyed and inundated by an atomic bomb so horrific and inhuman? Besides, moral evil is rooted in the freedom of man. Man in the exercise of his given freedom, commits a moral evil. Moral evil presupposes freedom on the part of human beings. In this definition of evil, Stumpf (1983) associated evil with freedom. He writes: "Evil is the possibility for wrong choice that accompanies a person's freedom … Its actual occurrence was not willed by God even though God willed that people should have freedom."(p. 187). In addition, moral evil includes social evil arising from bad social conditions of people in the society; political evil that turns politics into an instrument of persecution, cheat, injustices; economic evil that is unjust distribution of common resources as well as manipulation of religion to egoistic advantages, etc.; indeed moral evil among the Igbo comprises those serious personal or moral crimes or abomination which we commit, namely, patricide, incest, stealing

of yams and sheep, bestiality, willful abortion, pregnancy within a year of husband's death, suicide by hanging, the killing of sacred animals, etc.

Physical Evil
Natural or physical evil is evil done to man where man has no moral responsibility. Physical evils are those bodily pains which we suffer and endure. These include: tsunami, sickness, pain, hunger, anguish, disaster, earthquake, drought, flood, famine, plague, death: the ultimate "limit situation" to use the existentialist's phraseology, etc; are not evil in themselves. They become evil when they affect or strike man. Earthquake, for instance, is not evil in itself. It only becomes evil when it strikes man. It becomes evil when it causes a discomfort in the rightful nature of man. Bogliolo (1985) in explaining this observes that: "physical evils outside of man such as, earthquakes, hurricanes and floods are not, in themselves and in reality evils. They are evils in so far as they strike man". (p. 37).

The advance of science and technology is making the distinction between natural evil and moral evil narrower. It is no doubt any more than some acts of man have a part to play in some of the events that are regarded as pure natural evils. For example, the ruthless and quick exploitation of the natural resources of the universe by man of the industrial countries have been shown to be mainly responsible for the ugly nature of our planet. An example is the ugly effects of smoke from industries on the ozone layer.

Natural evil is caused at times by moral responsibility of man, thereby moral evil. This is why Reinchenbach includes as examples of natural evils, cancerous cells, viruses and defective genes, creatures of nature like mosquitoes, tse- tse flies, parasites, sharks as well as man, himself.

Metaphysical Evil
This is also called ontological evil. In fact, it is evil as a result of the nature of man as finite, limited and imperfect being. It is this imperfect nature of creatures that makes evil inevitable in their actions. Celebrated in the history of philosophy is this Liebnezian concept of metaphysical evil. He is of the view that this nature of creatures as finite makes them liable to errors. However, the basic objection to this view is that there is no privation in the nature of beings as finite. This is because finitude, imperfection is their rightful nature. Evil is committed only when that which is rightful to the nature of a being is being deprived. These thinkers are of the view that metaphysical evil is not evil in itself, since there is no privation. Bogliolo (1985) commenting on this said, "Just as vision is not proper to rock, infinity

is not proper to creatures, and being deprived of it, it is not evil for this reason". (p. 38).

Admittedly, metaphysical evil is seen as the root of all evils. The nature of man as imperfect makes him unable to get at the cure of the gruesome realities of ageing and death. Ignorance of the cause of certain diseases also impose on man the intensive suffering of having to undergo painful medical and therapeutic measures that only prolong life a little but do not prevent death. Thus, metaphysical evil is the root of all evils. John Hick calls it the "Iranian Tradition" of Theodicy. If men were not ontologically limited they would have been able to prevent certain evils, which men ignorantly commit. Hence, he would be able to prevent both the physical and moral evil, which he mostly commits in his decisions and actions.This basic fact above seems to remove the cause of evil from man and attributes it to God. It is God that created man with an imperfect nature, which makes evil inevitable. Some theologians in other to find a way of removing God from the blame, attributed the cause of evil to man's freewill. It is the misuse of man's freewill, according to these thinkers, that makes evil possible in the world.

This does not really solve the problem but only pushed it a step forward. Admittedly, God is omnipotent. Being omnipotent implies that He could, if he had wanted to, create man without making evil possible. Since evil exists, it then means that he (God) did not. Therefore, God cannot be exonerated absolutely from being the cause of evil in the world. He can only be the remote or proximate cause of evil in the world. This will be examined in details in our subsequent discussions in this paper.

Metaphysical evil consists in those imperfections inherent in a being. The Igbo consider these imperfections as abnormal and un- natural. Consequently, in Igbo world- view, according to Arinze (1970) the following fall within the category of metaphysical evil:

> Giving birth to twins (*ejima),* a person dying without anyone to attend to him (*Ikpu Iru*), pounding the pestle on the ground instead of in the mortar while pounding fou- fou, even if by mistake (*Isu Odu n'ani*), a woman climbing a palm tree, abnormal presentation in the birth of a baby (*Iji*

Okpa puta Uwa, a child cutting the upper teeth first *(nnwa eze enu)*, and the fighting of a masquerade *(mmuo mmanwu)*. (p. 35).

Abnormal behavior on the part of animals come under this category of evil and they include such acts as if a dog or a fowl crosses corpse; If a fowl lays only one egg; If a goat brings forth its young without anyone to attend it. (*Ewu Imu n'Ogbili*).

Evil and the Good, Omnipotent Creating God: the Igbo Perspective
Having discussed the concept of evil and its various categories, we now ask: whence is evil? How could the presence of evil be reconciled with the attributes of *CHI- UKWU* (the Ultimate Spirit) which the pre- modern Igbo man believes to be essentially Ultimate, Good, Omnipotent, Omniscient, etc? How did the Igbo address this age- long problem that agitated the minds of scholars and consequently divided them into warring camps?

Various attempts have been made by Igbo traditionalists and scholars of Igbo philosophy to reconcile the question of evil in the world. Actually in Igbo world- view there are many expressions such as- the day God or the spirit wills evil, the pot breaks when a fly perches on it. So from this, God wills it for known or unknown reason but man should accept it satisfactorily as God's doing. However, a critical analysis of some Igbo metaphysical and cosmological assumptions will give us some insights into the critical problem. Thus God's nature, particularly his Omnipotence, Goodness and Justice, His Omniscience, etc; which we had earlier examined and the practical experience of evil in a world created by such a God have lead scholars of Igbo philosophy to raise the issue a- new, namely, whence is evil in a world created by a Good and Omnipotent God?

This basic problem of Igbo philosophy can be said to have divided scholars of Igbo philosophy into various camps. But since the human mind presses for categories in things, the range and scope of the seemingly opposing camps of traditionalists and scholars on this problem can be grouped into three, namely, those who advance the theory that "man is solely accountable for evil in the world". In the second camp are those who adhere to the personal god and destiny theory or view and finally the third camp, the middle course traditionalists and scholars who maintain that man, his personal god and destiny and some spirits are responsible for the evil in the world. Evil according to scholars in this camp is the result of the combined activities of man and some spirits. This view is held nearly by all scholars of

Igbo philosophy. But how these activities can be explained in the face of an almighty and benevolent **CHI- UKWU** (the Greatest Chi) is difficult and controvertible. This accord in all respects with the observation which Edeh (1985) makes of the problem of evil when he writes:

> If God were all powerful, all good, and beings are, according to the Igbo, basically good because of their participation in the divine goodness, God would want to take away all evil and be able to do so. Since everyday experience testifies to the presence of evil in the world, God must not be either all –powerful or all- good. In either case He would not be God. (p. 103).

The Three Broad Views:
Igbo Cosmological Optimistic View
This view owed its origin to the Igbo traditional religionists and was borrowed and revived in a slightly different form in this modern period by some indigenous scholars of Igbo traditional thought, namely, that evil in the world is traceable to man. According to this view the Igbo expressly explain the problem of evil, that is to say, the origin and nature of various sorts of evil by assuming that God as *Okike* (Creator) is essentially good in himself and that his creation is intrinsically good, evil is something extraneous to it in the sense that evil is the consequences of some moral evil committed by man. The major exponents of this view very often point to the myths of withdrawal of God, proverbs and other cultural expressions as traditional rational grounds for insisting on this view, namely, that Igbo cosmological optimism explains the problem of evil in the universe. Nwala (1985) for instance supports this view lodging the whole cause of evil in the world on man. For Nwala:

> There is a belief in a created universe which is controlled by creator Chukwu- Okike. Man is in the centre of this creation. He is endowed with freedom and its attendant responsibility. There is belief in the unity among beings, belief in the original cosmic (universal) harmony and order which unfortunately the action of the human beings upsets (in this case as with the Bible story the woman starts the confusion). (p. 29).

In his study of Igbo world- view and Igbo Cosmological concepts Okafor (1992) was compelled to believe in the Igbo cosmological optimism. This cosmological optimism was his basis or basic background for regarding the physical world as ontologically good:

> It is a perfect world in structure and a beautiful world whose architect is a subject of admiration… The apparent evil and imperfection in the world are not intrinsic. They are rather the negation of the perfect cosmic order usually caused by the actions of men… A popular Igbo proverb says that *Madu bu njo ala* – "man makes the world evil". The Igbo saying that *Uwa ezu oke* which literally means that the world is imperfect does not imply any imperfection in creation but rather stresses the insatiability of human wants. (pp. 13- 14).

In Okafor therefore, the ideas of some pre- modern Igbo as also documented by Nwala seem to be reflected with due clearness, scientificity, criticality and precision, particularly since they backed up their arguments with some Igbo proverbs and cultural expressions. Thus showing that the Igbo are reasonable in what they hold. Consequently there is little or no doubt that in Okafor and Nwala, evil is the function of man himself, who is at the centre of God's creation. Thus all the changes in nature depend on man. Man frees the frozen forces in "things" and sets them in motion and even to meaningful behavior. Man is therefore responsible for every evil that happens in this world because of his actions and mode of being in the Igbo world.

This view emphasizes the Igbo belief that man is the corrupter of the land or society. "Whether we accept the Christian version of the origin of evil or not", says Nwala, "the pre- modern Igbo tend to believe that evil in all its various dimensions, namely, metaphysical as well as physical evils are ultimately due to the moral actions of man which is a moral disorder. Good and evil exist in the world as the traditional Igbo and the proponents of this view with their deep- rooted concept of the all- embracing goodness, righteousness, justice and all- powerful nature of *CHI- UKWU* (God) do not hesitate to attribute evil to man. God is good, they say, he created the world good, but the children of men have spoilt it. God can never be the proximate cause of evil in the world. Proximately, man is responsible for evil in the world, remotely, God causes it not as evil as such but in the sense that out of

the good (man) he causes, evil comes as part of it. God therefore does not cause evil proximately, man causes it. Even in the remote sense he (God) does not cause evil as such. He created every being, good.

This is another way of re- echoing the beautiful description of the goodness of the world at the time of creation and the disobedience on the part of man which introduced evil in the world which was intrinsically good. The authors of the Old Testament tell us that at the end of God's creative work, God sat back, looked at His creation and pronounced it good. Evil came into the world as a consequence of man's sin. God's creation was intrinsically good, evil was something extrinsic. It is worth mentioning here that despite the existence of an extreme position which some traditional Igbo scholars hold in this view, no modern scholar in this camp traces evil ultimately to man, to mean that man is the sole tune- player of misfortune in the world. Some spirits or gods are involved in one way or the other.

This view creates more problems that it sets out to solve. For it dissociates God from the problem, clings to the dogmatic assumptions of the goodness of God, and keeping quiet about the power of God. Admittedly, in this view, there are no known myths, proverbs and Igbo sayings which specifically set out to solve the paradox of God's infinite goodness, Omnipotence and evil in the world. But the importance and relevance of this view lies in subjecting some of these metaphysical and cosmological beliefs of the Igbo to various ratiocinative methods thereby arriving at a more scientific explanation of the problem at stake. The insightful but still defective solution does not detract from the goodness and omnipotence of God but preserves it in a way that complicates the issue the more. Some vexing problems like: Why can't **CHI- UKWU** (God) prevent man from causing evil still remains unanswered? Is man and only man and no other beings the cause of all misfortunes that we experience today? This brings us to the next view: The personal god and destiny view.

Personal God and Destiny View
Evil as viewed by the pre- modern Igbo and scholars in this camp has some link not directly with man but with his personal god who chooses his destiny package at the moment the individual is being born into the world. Its main contributions to our discussions on evil is that it began first by linking evil in the world to **CHI- UKWU,** God, only to turn back later to rationalize his role in the distribution of evil; namely as the source, controller and guarantor of ontological and moral orders in the universe. This view also recognizes the

clear distinction as well as the close connection between physical, metaphysical and moral evil, as well as the proximate and remote causes of evil. Unavoidably physical evil is blamed on ones personal god and destiny. This personal god and destiny assigned to man by God are also invoked to explain personal traits which one recognizes and may want to get rid of, but finds it extremely formidable to effect any serious changes. The summary point of it all is that the concept of personal god and destiny help to impute personal accountability in ethical behaviors as well as furnishing explanation for undeserved and unavoidable evils, namely, why are some people intelligent, rich, gifted, enjoy life, health and good fortune, while others may be born blind, deformed, foolish, become orphans, die young and end up barren so that directly questioned are God's justice, and goodness and indirectly His power.

According to this view each person's personal god and destiny are accountable for both avoidable and unavoidable evils and mistakes in life. The traditional Igbo believe that the Supreme Being assigns a personal god (Chi} to an individual whose *Chi* in turn brings a man all his good sometimes bad fortunes as well as poverty and sickness by choosing the destiny package (Chi) on which one's lot depend so much that every good and bad thing are attributed to it and also blamed for individual's mistakes in life.

The Igbo have personal names, proverbs and other cultural expressions which serve as traditional rational grounds for holding to this view, namely, that all good and misfortune or evil that befall a man in this life are blamed on this personal god and destiny. Such personal names like ***Nkechinyere*** (lot given by personal god); ***Chibumma, Chibueze*** (personal god makes and unmakes one), ***Chibuok****e* (personal god determines one's lot), ***Chibude*** (personal god makes one famous), are proofs for holding to this view. Igbo expressions like ***Onatara Chi*** (received from Chi but ratified by God) and *Ife Sina Chi* (misfortune and good fortunes come from the personal god) are further demonstrations of the origin of good and evil from one's personal god.

Some Igbo proverbs when critically analyzed yield results which support the same belief that the traditional Igbo expressly put the blame on the personal god who made the choice of the destiny package that brings a man his lot in life. They have the following proverbs to support their claims:

Onye Cholu Iga Chi Ya N'iru Ga Agbagbu Onwe Ya N' Oso: Literally, it means, whoever wants to go before his personal god will run himself to death. But on analysis, is another way of saying that a person's god is the sole determinant and responsible for man's destiny. The individual cannot but resign himself to the dictates of his personal god and the destiny assigned to him of which the individual has little or nothing to add or subtract. His destiny had been predestined and packaged with the active participation of the personal god. And the Igbo show this belief by their saying that you cannot escape bad fortune by resourcefulness (***Agbataghi Ajo Chi n'uzo olu)*** Again the Igbo say: ***Ebe Onye Dalu Ka Chi Ya Kwatulu Ya*** (where a person falls there his personal god pushed him down). On analysis this proverb means that a man can only go as far as his personal god allows him. This is because his destiny has been chosen for him/her by the personal god. It is on these traditional rational grounds, namely, personal names, proverbs and some other cultural expressions that the proponents of this view cannot but exonerate God from the evil in the world only to put the whole blame on man's personal god and destiny. But God assigns and entrusts to each man both his personal god and destiny that are responsible for the evil. Is he not then to blame? This ambiguity is explained if we remember that the Igbo believe that God can be either the proximate or the remote cause of evil.

It must however be admitted that in modern times, that is, among some scholars of Igbo traditional philosophy, this view has not enjoyed popular support even among those who really studied the concept of Chi in Igbo Ontology. The ambiguity or the equivocal nature of the concept of Chi might explain why some modern scholars are hesitant to subscribe solely to this traditional view.

That notwithstanding any traditional Igbo believes that God permits evil for good reason and that God does not commit evil against his creation. For that would be a contradiction. Consequently, if a man's personal God ratified by God when chosen by the personal god brings out misfortune or calamity, God must be exculpated. The misfortune resulting therein should be interpreted as a punishment for the misbehavior of a man or his kith and kin in his present or previous life respectively. For in Igbo traditional thought, the good and evil that men do have consequences not only on those who commit them but on those who live after them, in the sense that it has an effect on their kith and kin. This explains why physical evil is always explained by always trying to trace it back to either the deeds of a person or

back to his close relations. Thus through divination the Igbo try to ascertain whose action had invited a particular evil.

The point being expressed here in this view is that *Chi,* as a spirit guardian is God's vicar in man. It administers the contents of the parcel which he has chosen for the interest of the individual person. The person is completely ignorant of what his Chi holds in stock for him or her. This explains why a persistent misfortune or persistent moral laps could be blamed on one's Chi. Similarly any undeserved fortune or misfortune is regarded as a surprise packet from Chi. Metuh concludes that when a man dies, his Chi goes back to give account of his work and conduct.

The importance of this view, namely, personal god and personal destiny lies in the fact that it sees evil in the world in such a way that it does not detract from the goodness and omnipotence of the Divinity. God in this view transcends the moral and the ontological orders and undergards it as its Ultimate source and guarantor without compromising any of his essential characteristics. Above all, it believes that God sanctions human conducts, influences ethical attitudes even if slowly sometimes. On the other hand, it is defective in the sense that it does not offer sufficient explanation to our problem under discourse, namely, why God, a benevolent and omnipotent being should allow the existence of evil in the first place. However its role seems to be explained by its use as a means of preventing further evil (punishment). It deals more directly on the role of God, the individual deity and destiny rather than on the critical problem, the origin of evil in a world created by an omnipotent and Good God. From the personal god and destiny view, let us move over to the middle course view in search of a better solution to the critical problem. The two views already examined are insightful but certainly they have not offered enough or satisfactory explanation to our problem which is the task of our discussion here. We take a brief look at a moderate view. This moderate approach with regard to the problem of evil will at least show us how far removed the two previous views are from the solution.

The Middle – Course View
What one thinks is the most probable and defensible position to hold is not to succumb to either of the two views already examined. Rather the author of this paper intends to hold this middle course view as some scholars do. According to this view, man, his personal god and destiny and some other

known and unknown spirits particularly some spirits who specialize in mischief making are the originators of evil in the world. Many modern Igbo scholars support this view. For Okafor (1992) evil in the world is contingent upon the actions of man and the spirits. "The apparent evil in the world and imperfection in the world are not intrinsic. They are rather the negation of the perfect cosmic order usually caused by the actions of men and of the spirits". (p. 13) Edeh (1985) is a little more philosophical in his approach to the matter. He distinguished between the proximate and remote causes of evil, judged and acquitted **CHI- UKWU** (God) from the case. For Edeh, God can never be the proximate cause of evil. He finally blamed man, and the spirits for the existence of evil. "He reasons thus: However, judging from our treatment of the causes of evil…the three proximate causes of evil are the evil spirits, the element gods and human beings". (p. 109) And by element gods in Igbo culture is meant: "Earth, water (sea), Air (Wind), and Fire (Sun)". They are so called because they are extensions of divine activity and are feared and dreaded throughout Igbo land.

The author subscribes to this view for the following reasons: It will be accepted with fewer objections. This view is born out of experience and common sense. Man all through history apart from few exceptions, is traditionally accepted to be essentially a composite of body and spirit and the combined activities of these component parts of man, namely, those of the soul and of the body or spirit and matter in conjunction with the influence of his environment, all combine to share in the blame.

What might be considered as the most important reason for supporting this view is that it does not sacrifice or detract from the goodness and omnipotence of God. He did not cause evil proximately or remotely. He is the supreme Good, all- powerful and the cause of all things which are good in themselves. The point being emphasized here is that: even if God is spoken of to be the remote cause of evil in the sense that he created the proximate causes of evil, it must not be in the sense that he caused evil as such but in the sense that out of the good he created, evil comes as a part of it. The evil spirits mentioned here as one of the proximate causes of evil are not to be seen as created and designated as such. The Igbo believe that they were originally created good by God like other creatures. But later, during the course of their existence they turned evil, became depraved wills and are contributive of the evil in the world. In this way, the ambiguity that arises from the fact that God in creating the proximate causes of evil also creates evil spirits not as evil but as good is explained.

Furthermore this moderate view recognizes the infinity and incomprehensibility of God's nature. He is a mysterious being, "Self-thinking Thought" in the sense that he knows only himself and cannot think evil since he is Good in Himself. To think otherwise would tantamount to contradicting himself. Consequently, he should be exculpated from evil in the world. His creatures should be incriminated. Their finite and imperfect nature already disposes them to certain limitations, privations or deprivations one of which is evil, our subject of much controversy. Man and creatures of God considered as imperfect creatures of a Perfect Being cannot but be the causes of evil. God transcends evil. He is wholly "Other" (*Onweghi Onye Mobu Ihe Yiri Ya)*. And by the principle of identity which states that a being is what it is, Creatures of God are finite and limited in perfection they can never be otherwise, that is to say, they can never turn out to be perfect. They continue to cause evil in the world.

Before we wind up this section of our paper on God and evil, let us say a word or more about the fate of those who die in evil. Since evil in Igbo world- view is a breach of **Omenani** (body of Igbo Socio – religious customs and tradition) they believe that anyone who disrupts this God's established order or **Omenani** and who until at the time of his death does not set in motion proper means to restore the ontological disorder already disrupted by his act through appeasement of the gods and goddesses will never, never become an ancestor neither will he reincarnate. This so called belief in reincarnation among the Igbo which stipulates that only the certified "good' reincarnate makes the whole explanation of evil mere elusive. Questions like what happens to the personal god, the malevolent spirits, the human persons who are the tune- players in the scoring of evil in the world remain unsolved. Reincarnation and ancestorhood are two traditional theories that are contradictory and unacceptable respectively. While the former is unreasonable because it teaches that man's spirit can be in the spirit world and in the physical world simultaneously. And ancestorhood as an eschatological theory about the final end of man is not vertically oriented, that is to say, it is not oriented towards God who is the Ultimate source, sustainer, controller and governor and final end of all things and as such leaves much to be desired.

Conclusion
The problem of evil among the Igbo is never to be taken as a dead issue in the face of the fore- going discussions above. For one thing, the Igbo, apart

from believing that divinity is a kind Father, he is also a divinity which is manifested in the gods who are his agents of moral order and who a times cause man to commit evil and who administer raw deal to evil men when occasion calls for it and very drastically, too. This complicates rather than reconcile the problem. The problem is complicated the more, in the light of some Igbo traditional thought and practice. They sometimes accept some undeserved evils without questioning and try to explain away by not blaming God rather than subscribing to the beliefs that God and his ways are incomprehensible. He is **Amama Amasi Amasi** (known but not fully known). This is simplistic panacea and is another way of admitting that the pre- modern Igbo have no final answer to the problem of evil. Its ghost keeps on haunting modern scholars of Igbo philosophy. And I guess that as long as the solution to the problem is oriented towards the easy and towards the easier side of the easy, that is to say, keeping quiet and insisting on protecting the essential nature of God without sufficient reasons, and more importantly trying to explain such metaphysical problem without any reference to supernatural revelation or faith, the solution is not likely to be abetted in the near future. This is because there are truths about God which are accessible to reason; and there are others which transcend it and the problem of evil in the world and some other concepts of God are such truths that transcend reason's capacity. These cannot be comprehended only by the traditional mind. The role of faith here is indispensable. Faith in the incomprehensible confers upon rational knowledge its crowning perfection. Faith must complement reason's efforts if some of these metaphysical problems are to receive adequate and more acceptable solution. That is, faith is accepted to contribute to human knowledge.

Igbo traditional world- view does not enjoy this supernatural faith which Christianity furnishes. That notwithstanding, it accepts evil as an existent reality in a universe created by an omnipotent and Good God. Furthermore, with that faculty common to all men, namely, rationality, it tries to proffer solutions to the paradox only acceptable to the extent reason can go to comprehend the incomprehensible. Rather than allow the problem of evil to lead the traditional mind to conceive God in such a way that it detracts from his essential nature, he prefers to defend it. Thus God can never cease to be good, omnipotent, omniscient, etc; even if evil continues to multiply in a geometrical progression. God is Good Himself as opposed to His creatures that were created good but later turned evil. And because the pre- modern mind does not enjoy the benefits of supernatural revelation to reveal the hidden truths about God, he resorts to admitting that their natural reason

cannot render any final answer to such metaphysical problems. The Igbo man therefore believes that God and his ways are incomprehensible. He is a mystery and his ways are also mysterious. At bottom, at the creation time, there was perfect structural order and there was no evil or disorder, The Igbo believe this and they very much put it into practice. Disorder was introduced into the whole system after man has disrupted the order by his actions and the actions of some spirits. God can never cause evil proximately neither can he be blamed if evil results from the good he created. Such a created being is to take the blame and not God who created it good *per se* (in itself). God remains the Ultimate, good, benevolent omnipotent, omniscient and creator God. Notwithstanding all the illuminations on the origin of evil in the world from these views which are supported by traditional rational grounds, the solution is still far from being adequate. Our solutions are still simplistic and elusive, and it remains if not a complete enigma, puzzle, definitely, an ever perplexing paradox to most scholars of Igbo philosophy who are not keen to marry reason with faith as the surest means of establishing the truths about evil and God in the world. Faith must come in to supply the truths about God which reason's capacity cannot reach. ***Uwa Amaka Mma Ma Na Obu Umu Uwa Mebiri Uwa.*** (It is a beautiful world but the people in it have spoilt it). Indeed the presence of evil and imperfection existent in the world today are extrinsic. They are the consequences of the actions of men and the gods.

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